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PRESS RELEASE

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El Centro, CA: Chief Patrol Agent William T. Veal, of the San Diego Border Patrol Sector, announced the leasing of an UH-1H “Huey” helicopter today. The leased helicopter will be used in search and rescue operations in the San Diego and El Centro Sector areas. Additionally, the Helicopter will be used as part of the Air Mobile Unit to strategically deploy agents in high-risk areas at the immediate border in an effort to deter migrants from these hazardous entry points. The leasing of the helicopter adds an additional air asset to the border safety and enforcement effort.

The Border Safety Initiative, an aggressive border wide public safety program implemented in 1998, identifies high-risk corridors and distributes the necessary resources to create a safer border environment. In July 2000, the Tucson Sector was identified as a high-risk corridor. Recognizing this concern, in correlation with the desert heat, an effort to augment the existing border safety resources resulted in air-assets being re-allocated to the Tucson Sector. The San Diego Sector redeployed its assigned Huey helicopter to the Tucson Sector. This redeployment was crucial in assisting Tucson Sector in their efforts to prevent the loss of life.

Alien smugglers continue to defy common sense and ruthlessly guide migrants through extreme geographic and dangerous regions. The Border Safety Initiative was designed to reduce injuries and prevent fatalities along the border. Chief Patrol Agent Veal stated, “The acquisition of another helicopter expands the rescue capabilities of the Border Patrol. The employment of an additional air asset facilitates search and rescue operations from San Diego, California to Tucson, Arizona.”

The El Centro Sector also issued 100 hot weather packs, a first of its kind in the El Centro Sector. These kits are issued to provide agents with the necessary tools to render immediate aid to victims of heat related injuries. Each kit contains Gatorade, electrolyte tablets, water, food, cold packs, a white sheet and a laminated sheet of paper describing the symptoms of, and treatments for each stage of heat related injuries. There are currently over 600 cold and hot weather packs carried in the field today.